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NICARAGUA DOCUMENT

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The White House denounced as "utterly untrue" today a charge by the Republican chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee that an administration decision to release an intercepted Nicaraguan government document was a political tactic jeopardizing sensitive intelligence sources.

White House spokesman Edward Djerejian commented after the chairman, Sen. David Durenberger of Minnesota, declared that the White House plan to release the document was an "outrageous" attempt to portray as a "stooge of communism" any opponent of military aid to rebels fighting Nicaragua's leftist regime.

"Sen. Durenberger's statement that the White House intends to make public a sensitive classified document to lobby the Congress is utterly untrue," Djerejian said.

"At the urging of members of Congress who were given the opportunity to review sensitive classified information, the State Department this coming week plans to issue information regarding the Nicaraguan government's efforts aimed at influencing the American political process, including disinformation efforts," he said.

"We believe the U.S. government has the responsibility to let the American public know of this scheme of the Nicaraguan government, but we certainly will not compromise sensitive sources and methods as the senator's statement suggests."

In a statement released Thursday, Durenberger said the decision jeopardized sensitive intelligence sources in a "transparent political tactic" intended to gain support for President Reagan's plan to send the Contra rebels \$100 million in lethal and non-lethal aid.

"The real betrayal here is to the American people who look to senior leadership to live up to their responsibility to protect intelligence from political exploitation," Durenberger said.

Sen. Patrick J. Leahy, D-Vt., the intelligence panel's vice chairman, added later that he was "as frustrated as (Durenberger) when the administration

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selectively leaks classified information to bolster a policy ... and especially when there's a suggestion that if you don't agree with them, you're not American."

Earlier this week, the White House lobbied members of Congress by showing them a document that administration officials, including CIA Director William J. Casey, said revealed the leftist Nicaraguan Sandinista government planned a "disinformation campaign."

Administration officials initially refused to release the classified document to the public, but White House spokesman Edward Djerejian said a declassified version would be released Monday.

Congressmen who were shown the document said it described a campaign by "peace advocates" that would include sit-ins, information about the success of Nicaragua's coffee crop and flowers sent to Capitol Hill offices.

Elliott Abrams, assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs, said the document was "Nicaraguan (and) mentions American citizens." He added that some of those Americans "would be shocked to find their names appearing in such a document as the people the Sandinistas plan to use."

Rep. Don Edwards, D-Calif., chairman of the House Judiciary subcommittee on constitutional rights, said the administration's use of the document "has shades of McCarthyism about it. ... They're red-baiting the peace organizations, many of whom are religious organizations."

Rep. Dave McCurdy, D-Okla., a key moderate on the House Intelligence Committee, said he had not seen the document but was "constantly amazed" at the administration's attitude toward classified material.

McCurdy, who was one of those providing crucial swing votes in giving the administration \$27 million in non-lethal aid for the Contras last year, also said that if Reagan's Contra aid proposal is sent to Congress "as advertised, it will fail."

He added that the White House appeared "more concerned about politics than policy" in its determination to resume lethal military aid to the Contras, who were supported by the CIA from 1981 to 1984. He said a greater emphasis is needed on diplomacy.

McCurdy also criticized the quality of U.S. intelligence analysis on Nicaragua, contending that there is "too much upper-level handling of the intelligence. ... The politicization of this (area of intelligence) has been such that it is discredited."

CIA spokeswoman Kathy Pherson said the spy agency had no comment on the criticism.

Earlier Thursday, House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill Jr., D-Mass., attacked Reagan's plan for Contra military and logistical aid as likely to bring only "disaster and shame" to the United States.

Confronted with well-armed government troops, the "rag-tag" Contra forces will face only "slaughter and a humiliation ... and the shame of defeat will bring our troops in there," O'Neill warned.